

PHIL 6998-301 Pre-Dissertation Philosophy Writing Workshop (Draft)

INSTRUCTOR: Sukaina Hirji sukaina@sas.upenn.edu
Jennifer M. Morton jmmorton@sas.upenn.edu
DATE/TIME: Wednesday 11:30-1:30pm
LOCATION: Cohen TBA
OFFICE HOURS: By appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES (What this course will aim to enable you to do):

- (1) Developing a sustainable writing practice—transitioning from deadline-driven writing to a consistent, self-directed research routine, making writing a habit, and building strategies to overcome psychological barriers to writing
- (2) Reading and analyzing a paper for writing technique—outlining academic articles, developing an eye for what makes writing effective, and discovering the writing style you “vibe” with
- (3) Mastering iterative drafting—becoming comfortable with sharing rough first drafts, incorporating feedback, and radically reworking or rewriting a paper when needed (almost always in the early stages)
- (4) Finding your writing “voice”—trying new writing methods and modes with an eye to audience, mastering philosophical rigor and clarity while retaining ownership over your work, discovering your strengths as a writer, and identifying your weaknesses
- (5) Producing one highly polished piece of academic writing that could be part of your dissertation or eventually submitted for publication

COURSE TEXTS: All readings available on Canvas.

REQUIREMENTS

10% Participation
20% Writing Exercises
10% Peer Reports
20% 1st paper draft & presentation
20% 2nd revised paper draft, revision memo & presentation
20% Final revised paper submission with revision memo

WRITING EXERCISE: We will ask you to do some in-class and take-home short writing exercises.

PEER REPORTS: Over the course of the semester, we will ask you to write two reports (300-500 words) on a peer’s paper. You will share these reports with the class to kick off discussions about your peers’ work. These reports should focus on providing constructive feedback, not on tearing down an argument. The report should address the following questions: What is the author’s central thesis, and how would you summarize the author’s main argument in 2-3 sentences? What was the paper’s strongest point, both argumentatively and in writing? What do you see as the paper’s main weakness, and how could the author improve it? Where did the writing hinder understanding of the main argument? If the author has limited time to revise, what 2-3 key changes do you think they should prioritize?

PAPER DRAFTS & PRESENTATION: You will share a paper with the rest of the class for feedback at least twice during the semester. Please submit the paper to the class by Sunday at 8 pm for discussion on Wednesday. Start the

discussion with a brief 5-minute presentation where you describe the specific question or problem your paper addresses, the main idea of the paper, and what you most want feedback on. Your referees will share their feedback, and then we will open the floor for discussion. During your second presentation, you will present a significantly revised version of the paper along with a “revision memo” explaining how you responded to the feedback received.

FINAL PAPER: At the end of the semester, you’ll send us a final version of your paper that incorporates feedback from both workshops along with a revision memo to Sukaina and Jen.

PARTICIPATION: Sharing writing and receiving feedback can be a vulnerable and challenging experience. However, without really “listening” to critical feedback and embracing the process of revision, your writing is unlikely to improve. The success of this course depends on each person's willingness to share work that is messy or imperfect and on the rest of the class supporting that process by being constructive and empathetic in their critical feedback. Our aim is to foster a classroom environment where you feel comfortable sharing your rough drafts and accepting feedback.

POLICIES

GRADING: In this course, your grade will be based not just on the quality of your work, but on your improvement. That means we are looking for you to demonstrate that you are willing to take risks, flexible about abandoning early arguments that no longer serve you or completely rewriting them in light of feedback, and committed to improving your writing. We value the courage it takes to share a “shitty” first draft and the vulnerability required to really listen to the feedback you are offered.

HONOR CODE: All students are expected to follow the guidelines of Penn's Code of Academic Integrity. In particular, students are expected to refrain from "lying, cheating, or stealing" in an academic context (but it's also probably good to avoid doing these things in general). If you are unsure about which actions violate that honor code, please consult <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity>. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Always cite any resource that you use (including friends with whom you have worked if cooperation is permitted on an assignment). Do not reuse papers written for other classes. The internet has made it easier than ever before to catch this sort of thing, so (moral reasons aside) it is not a particularly wise idea.

AI ASSISTED WRITING: This is a graduate philosophy seminar whose purpose is to teach the writing and research skills you will need to be a philosopher, a thinker, and a researcher. Using AI tools like Grammarly, Word Spell/Grammar check, etc. is fine. However, it would disrupt the pedagogical purpose of this class, to use AI tools to *generate* text.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT: The Weingarten Center offers a variety of resources to support all Penn students in reaching their academic goals. All services are free and confidential. To contact the Weingarten Center, call 215-573-9235. The office is located in Stouffer Commons at 3702 Spruce Street, Suite 300.

DISABILITY SERVICES: The University of Pennsylvania provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities who have self-identified and received approval from Disability Services. Students can contact Disability Services and make appointments to discuss and/or request accommodations by calling 215-573-9235.

Date	
1/21	Writing Why & How (1) How to get over writer's block/perfectionism? how to develop a daily/regular practice? (led by Jen) (2) What are the elements that every philosophy paper needs to have? How to develop an outline before you start writing? (led by Sukaina). • Bring your favorite philosophy paper to share. • Recommended: Lamott, selections from Bird by Bird , skim “favorite” papers
1/28	Paper Framing & Reframing: Finding a Topic (1) How to go from an idea/inspiration to an actual manageable paper topic (2) How to figure out framing once you have an idea of your thesis • Read Daniel Munoz’s Writing Philosophy, Peter Adamson’s Blog on Writing
2/4	Audience & Style (1) Playing around with styles / finding your voice? How to write for your audience/audiences? (2) The nitty gritty: paragraphs and sentences (led by Jen) • Read: TBA
2/11	Incorporating Feedback (1) -how to give and receive feedback from your peers and professors (2) -R&R’s and how to revise • Read: TBA
2/18	Paper Presenter: Peer Referees:
2/25	Paper Presenter: Peer Referees:
3/4	Paper Presenter: Peer Referees:
3/11	Spring Break
3/18	Paper Presenter: Peer Referees:
3/25	Paper Presenter: Peer Referees:
4/1	Paper Presenter: Peer Referees:
4/8	Paper Presenter: Peer Referees:
4/15	Paper Presenter: Peer Referees:
4/22	Paper Presenter: Peer Referees:
4/29	Paper Presenter: Peer Referees:
5/12	Final Paper & Revision Memo Due